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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002420

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2013

TAGS: PGOV PREL TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY-ARMENIA: EMBASSY RECOMMENDS NO USG

STATEMENT ON TARC HISTORICAL STUDY

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reasons:  
1.5(b)(d).

¶1. (U) Action recommendation--paras 5-6.

¶2. (C) Embassy Ankara understands that the Department may be considering issuing a statement noting the conclusions reached by an ICTJ panel, meeting under Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee (TARC) auspices March 10, regarding the legal applicability of the term "genocide" to the World War One-era massacres of Armenians by elements of the Ottoman Empire.

¶3. (C) Both Embassy and ConGen Istanbul have looked carefully into the facts concerning the TARC's deliberations. As we understand it from multiple Turkish interlocutors, there was considerable disagreement between the Turkish and Armenian sides and unhappiness on the Turkish side over the way TARC handled the report.

¶4. (C) The Turks see the report as clearly overstepping its narrow mandate. Rather than confining itself to questions surrounding the legal applicability of the term "genocide," the TARC report delved into issues of historical applicability as well. As a result, the Turks, both panelists and the MFA, have no objection to the first part of the report, which deals with the legal issues -- particularly since it clearly states that the UN Convention cannot be applied retroactively and that there can be no collective responsibility. However, they reject the report's treatment of historical matters as beyond the scope of the ICTJ and lacking in depth.

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Post's Conclusion and Recommendation  
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¶5. (C) Washington can best judge the equities here. If there is no requirement for the USG to endorse a statement of a private group, our choice would be to avoid it. We have so far managed the considerable tensions in the Armenian Turkish Track II process well by reminding everyone that the effort is non-governmental. Mixing the two Tracks, even once, will leave them intertwined. If there should be a statement, our preference would be after April 24. Perhaps there are some salon intellectuals in Istanbul or retired diplomats with contacts with this group who do not object to a pre-April 24 statement, but these people have no connection and no influence whatsoever on GOT thinking or reactions. Following their line on Iraq and Cyprus, these people might even be happy to have the AK Party embarrassed or cornered on the Armenian issue. If there is to be a statement and it is to be before April 24, we recommend that Ambassador Logoglu be briefed in advance and that we receive the cleared press guidance well in advance. We appreciate the opportunity to provide our views.

PEARSON